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SUBJECT: Media Say Turkey and Azerbaijan Will Address Tensions Over
Turco-Armenian Relations

MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2009

In Today's Papers

'Simultaneous Detentions' in Several Cities under Ergenekon
Investigation

Television channels reported Monday morning that under the ongoing 'Ergenekon' investigation, police detained one current and three former university rectors in simultaneous operations held in the early hours of Monday in several cities. Police detained Professor Mehmet Haberal, the rector of the Baskent University in Ankara, Professor Mustafa Yurtkuran, deputy chairman of Ataturk Thought Association (ADD) and former Rector of Uludag University in Bursa, Professor Fatih Hilmioglu, former rector of the Inonu University in Malatya, and Professor Ferit Bernay, the former rector of Ondokuz Mayis University in Samsun. Police, earlier in the day, raided Baskent University, the headquarters of the Kanal B television owned by Haberal in Ankara and branches of the Support for Modern Life Association (CYDD) in several cities. Police also searched the Istanbul home of the chairwoman of the CYDD, Professor Turkan Saylan. Televisions report "simultaneous operations" continue in eighteen provinces, including Izmir and Diyarbakir.

Controversy Continues Over Turkey-Armenia Border Opening

Weekend papers report Prime Minister Erdogan reacted to Armenian President Serzh Sargsian's statement to the press, in which Sargsian said he would like "to cross the open border into Turkey before the October 14 World Cup qualifier soccer game" which is scheduled to take place in Istanbul. Erdogan, who was on vacation in Hatay over the weekend, told the press late Friday, "We have announced several times that the border with Armenia won't be opened before the problems between Armenia and Azerbaijan are resolved." Erdogan also said, "We may take preliminary steps, but opening the border crossing totally depends on the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh question between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The U.S., as the part of the Minsk Trio, must accomplish its task in this matter. In the Minsk group, we also have France and Russia. We'll open the crossing immediately once they solve this (Nagorno Karabakh) problem," stressed Erdogan. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) sources told Radikal, "Saying the border won't be opened is not true, but

the normalization process should not be cut." Papers report Ankara will send a parliamentary delegation to Baku to "calm down" the Azerbaijanis.

Liberal Radikal reported Sunday that FM Babacan has put his April 16 trip to Yerevan for the Black Sea Summit meeting on hold.

Yasar Yakis, the head of the Turkish Parliament's EU Adjustment Committee, told reporters Sunday the opening of the border between Turkey and Armenia was "part of a larger package" which includes the settlement of the Karabakh dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. "Opening the border is not a matter that began with President Obama's recent visit to Turkey," Yakis said, adding the issue has been "on the table since 2007, with Switzerland involved."

Meanwhile, mainstream Hurriyet writes Monday the PanArmenia News Agency of Armenia claims Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev will meet Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev in Moscow on April 16th. Turkey is expected to take part in the meeting, which is expected to focus on the Nagorno Karabakh dispute.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan

Omer Taspinar opined in mainstream Sabah: "In order to improve relations with the EU, both Ankara and the EU should exert extra efforts. The AKP should think of new formulas and the EU should show a little strategic vision. Turkey should not relax just because Obama paid a visit to Turkey recently. If a crisis with the U.S. erupts on April 24, then we'll be in a worse situation than we were in the 1990s regarding our relations with the U.S. and the EU.

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Obama wants to see Turkey-Armenia ties normalized; unfortunately, Turkey has tied this issue to Azerbaijan's Karabagh issue. If there is any delay to the normalization process with Armenia, President Obama can surprise us with his speech on April 24. Without any delay, Turkey should complete its normalization process with Armenia."

Semih Idiz wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "PM Erdogan will understand how risky it is to mix diplomacy and populism. He mixed the two recently by connecting the Karabakh issue to Turkey's normalization process with Armenia. Azerbaijani President Aliyev spoiled the process between Turkey and Armenia at a very strategic point. Because Aliyev halted the normalization process, Turkey's relations to the U.S. and the EU are now troubled. We will wait and see, but in response to Turkey's sacrifice for Baku, the Turkish government may ask Baku to sacrifice its stance on the Cyprus issue."

Ardan Zenturk wrote in tabloid Star: "Certain circles were screaming until a short while ago that Turkey should keep its border and its relations with Armenia open. Now, these same circles are playing national campaign drums in the papers. A crisis is brewing in the Caucasus because the Karabakh issue is being presented as a domestic political issue for Turkey."

Secretary Gates to Visit Turkey

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports Monday Secretary of Defense Robert Gates will visit Turkey in April or early May. Citing no sources, that paper reports, "Gates will have talks with the Turks at the MFA, TGS as well as with PM Erdogan to discuss Turkey's additional military support to Afghanistan and the U.S. troop exit from Iraq through Turkey."

"Obama Tells Iraqi Kurdish Leaders to Solve Problems with Baghdad" (Sabah)

Mainstream Sabah reports Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish member of the Iraqi Parliament known for his ties to the PKK, said President Obama told the Iraqi Kurdish leaders in a Baghdad meeting last week to resolve their problems with Baghdad. According to Othman, Obama warned that "the Kurds' weak ties with Baghdad could cause weak ties with the U.S.," and Obama "pledged more support for the Kurds if they solve disagreements with the central Iraqi government." Othman noted "Obama stressed the Kurdish region was viewed as part of Iraq." Othman says Obama also urged the Kurds "to seek closer ties

with Turkey, warning the Kurdish leaders that if they move away from Turkey, they may distance themselves from the U.S. as well," reports Sabah.

Editorial Commentary on Obama's Turkey Visit

Ali Aslan wrote in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "The biggest benefit Turkey took from the recent contacts with Obama is the establishment of a warm, personal relationships between the leaders of the two countries. While the world is going through a troublesome period, the good bilateral communication between the top levels of government in the U.S. and Turkey will definitely benefit efforts to resolve current and future issues."

Turkish Military Continue 'Spring Operations' against the PKK
Sunday papers report two soldiers and seven terrorists have been killed in fighting with PKK militants in the province of Sirnak. Following the killing of the two soldiers, the Turkish military launched extensive security operations in the area with 5,000 troops. Leftist Taraf warns on Sunday "The fighting came on the day when Interior Minister Besir Atalay went to Iraq to discuss the steps for the elimination of the PKK." Papers also report anti-terror spring operations continue in the province of Tunceli.

Veteran Islamist Leader Erbakan Makes a Comeback

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All papers report veteran Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan made a "fast comeback" to Saadet Partisi (SP) after he was recently pardoned by President Gul. Some papers expect Erbakan to "guide" the party as its "honorary chairman." Cumhuriyet, however, reports Saadet's Chairman Kurtulmus did not attend the press conference Erbakan held Friday at SP party headquarters. After his press conference, Erbakan travelled to Iran to meet President Ahmadinejad, the religious leader Khamanei and former president Rafsanjani.

ADD Sues to Ban Access to Google
Sunday papers report the Ataturk Thought Association (ADD) asked courts to ban access to the internet search engine Google. The ADD complained to the court by saying "Google is guiding users to websites that insult the founder of modern Turkey, Ataturk." Mainstream Vatan reminds that earlier, the ADD had managed through a court decision to ban access to the video-sharing website YouTube; and "now the association could 'disgrace' Turkey once again."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- State Minister Mehmet Simsek said Turkey and the IMF agreed in principle to a new stand-by deal, but they have not drafted the preliminary deal yet.
- On April 26, former deputy prime minister Abdullatif Sener is expected to announce, together with 40 former MPs and ministers, the founding of a new political party.
- On Tuesday, the military General Staff (TGS) chief General Ilker Basbug will deliver his annual speech at the War Academy in Istanbul.
- Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP leader Ahmet Turk will meet European parliamentarians and NGO representatives in London from April 20-24.

World

- Turkish Cyprus will hold its tenth general elections on April 19, in which seven parties will run.
- The Pentagon says U.S. Navy forces have freed an American sea captain being held by pirates off the coast of Somalia, killing three pirates and taking a fourth into custody in the process.
- A week after a devastating earthquake hit central Italy,

authorities have called off the search for survivors. The death toll stands at 294.

- British media reports President Obama's half-brother was denied a visa to Britain after he earlier gave a false name to police when accused of an attempted sexual assault.

JEFFREY